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REVIEWS.

Edouard Rod, Essay sur Goethe, Paris, 1898.

THE interest in German literature of late evinced by France has been striking. Good French works on Bürger, Platen, Heine, Nietzsche, the Nibelungenlied, etc., have proved that the desire to become acquainted with German thought and letters which characterized France at the beginning of our century, though for a time interrupted, has by no means died out. For the best Frenchmen have always been, in spite of a reputation to the contrary, conspicuous for a tendency to absorb the most valuable elements of German intellectual life. M. Rossel's recent work on the literary relations of France and Germany furnishes material sufficient to convince the incredulous. It is a pleasure to see that while England makes few and generally dilletante efforts to understand the national literature of Germany, the French exhibit considerable curiosity in that direction, and their workers in this field often combine with native grace and superior literary training, accuracy in the treatment of details, and excellent knowledge of the literature of the topic discussed.

The book before us comes from the pen of one of the most conspicuous litterateurs of contemporary Paris. M. Rod is a respectable novelist, a prominent literary critic, and for a time was a lecturer at the University of Geneva. He is well and favorably known in France, and a book from him, especially on a subject which he professed as an academic teacher, would carry considerable weight in French-speaking countries. If inspired by the desire to interpret Goethe to the French world, it would do much towards opening prejudiced minds ; if lacking such a spirit, it would help to deepen the attitude of lazy hostility and general lack of insight which still exists to so large an extent in regard to Goethe all over the world, and would only impede the progress of what all lovers of culture most warmly desire : a growing comprehension everywhere, unbiased and mature, of everything important in the world's

literature. Unfortunately the *Essai sur Goethe*, though marked by good familiarity with a part of the subject (some bad mistakes excepted), and though containing interesting pages, is filled with a spirit totally alien to anything like a wish to present a fair picture of Goethe's contribution and to interpret him as an artistic or a culture-force.

The book is divided into six chapters: The first, 'Les Memoires,' discusses *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, the second, 'La crise romantique,' *Goetz von Berlichingen*, the third, 'La crise sentimentale,' *Werther*, the fourth, 'Le poète de cour,' mainly *Tasso*, the fifth, 'Le dernier roman,' the *Elective Affinities*, and the last, 'La grande oeuvre,' *Faust*. In other words, several of the most important works are either hardly mentioned at all or spoken of in passing. This is true of *Wilhelm Meister*, *Egmont*, *Iphigenie*, *Hermann und Dorothea*, and last, but not least, the lyrical poems as a whole. Rod does not therefore convey an adequate conception of Goethe as a literary personality. He leaves you stranded half-way, wondering whether all the rest of Goethe's intellectual activity is not worth discussing in detail or insufficiently known to the author.

The most interesting and original chapters in the book are the first and third. Rod shows with acumen that the part of *Dichtung* in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* is greater than is often appreciated and that the deviations from the truth on Goethe's part are not due altogether to defective memory or simply to the desire to create a work of art. Similarly, the sentiments expressed in *Werther*, Rod shows with some skill not to be, as has generally been believed, the reflex of Goethe's own experiences, but largely invented for literary purposes. We are grateful for the analysis in some of these pages, even though Rod's arguments may shake time-honored beliefs. But, however brilliant the logic and the use of documentary material is in this third chapter, we could not help being surprised at the inferiority of the literary criticism exhibited in it. Rod is rightly offended at Grimm's exaggerated estimate of *Werther*, but one hardly contributes 'à ramener à des proportions plus justes, et pour ainsi dire à assainir l'idée qu'on se fait couramment de cette oeuvre fameuse,' by pointing out its faults and entirely failing to see its remarkable excellencies. *Werther* continues to interest a generation like

ours, fond of careful character-studies, because it is one of the first novels in the world's literature dealing with processes rather than results, and doing it with altogether remarkable skill and efficiency. We are made to follow step by step the gradual evolution in morbidity of a hyper-sensitive mind ; we are led to appreciate how on account of his unhappy love the hero is depressed and morally enfeebled by experiences which would have no or little effect on a healthy person. Occasional hints give us glimpses of the progress of this inner decay : Werther first reads Homer, later revels in Ossian ; in a letter dated August 18th, he writes that while he was happy, he felt 'vom unzugänglichen Gebirge ueber die Einöde die kein Fuss betrat, bis ans Ende des unbekannten Ozeans weht der Geist des Ewigschaffenden und freut sich jedes Staubes, der ihn vernimmt und lebt,' but now that he is more unhappy and morbid 'hat sich vor meiner Seele ein Vorhang weggezogen, und der Schauplatz des unendlichen Lebens verwandelt sich vor mir in den Abgrund des ewig offenen Grabes.' Those who have had an opportunity to study the treatment of nature in different ages will feel the felicity of these words as a symptom of Werther's condition. Entire generations, as for instance the representatives of the romantic movement in different countries, because of their morbidity, tend to look upon nature in the spirit of Werther when melancholy and oppressed, whereas more mighty souls like Goethe and Wordsworth at their best see her power and exuberance. And not only does Werther reason about nature so as to lay bare the state of his inner life, but, sensitive as he is, she affects his moods. In no work previous to the appearance of this novel is there, to my knowledge, a subtler correspondence between 'background' and 'foreground.' In the first letters, spring, exultant and fragrant, smiles about the hero, but he ends his sad career on a gloomy winter day. Lastly, *Werther* betrays admirable appreciation of those almost indefinable forces which rule the actions, particularly of weak men. Werther's friend insisted on Werther's either trying to win Lotte, or on his shaking off his unhealthy love for her. But he answers 'In der Welt ist es sehr selten mit einem Entweder-Oder gethan, die Empfindungen und Handlungsweisen schattieren sich mannigfaltig, als Abfälle zwischen einer Habichts und Stumpfnase sind,' and

the work is a study of those gradual moral processes which almost imperceptibly may lead to greatness or may lead to ruin. No work of fiction in the last century has more happily treated a hyper-emotional character at the mercy of temptation. Fiction since has gone beyond what Goethe could do in his youth, but none of the novels preferred by M. Rod contains analysis so fine as *Werther*. When M. Rod says (p. 135) that St. Preux in spite of his 'éclats souvent fastidieux' awakens 'un sentiment de vérité profonde,' whereas in reading *Werther* we remember that Goethe trifled with Maximiliane a week after he left Lotte, he lapses into a fault which he doubtless would be the first to attack in others; he allows the scholar in him to strangle the critic. One is reminded of V. Hehn's incapacity to enjoy the exquisite lines 'Du bist wie eine Blume,' etc., because he could not imagine Heine blessing or praying.

I have gone at such length into this discussion, because M. Rod's treatment of *Werther* is typical of his method throughout. Almost everywhere an evident spirit of hostility towards Goethe is curiously coupled with a tendency to be doctrinaire, worthy of M. Edouard Schérer in his extremest moods.

In similar fashion, the arguments which M. Rod advances to prove the inferiority of Tasso are fatuous. He himself admits (p. 192) 'Si l'on veut savoir comment Goethe concevait sa propre image, c'est ici qu'on pourra l'apprendre, en observant Tasse et Antonio dans l'être unique qui a été leur seul modèle. On ne saurait méconnaître que cette image est fort belle. A eux deux, ces deux hommes possèdent une âme commune capable de réfléchir l'univers, et le contraste qu'ils forment embrasse toute la vie. Nous ne pourrions imaginer aucune idée qui ne trouvât en l'un ou en l'autre l'espace de s'épanouir, aucun sentiment dont l'un ou l'autre ne pût être la haute expression, aucun acte que l'un ou l'autre ne pût accomplir. Les répliques qu'ils échangent, les reproches mêmes qu'ils s'adressent, ce sont de profondes paroles, au sens lointain, qui traduisent avec une puissance symbolique le désaccord flagrant du rêve et de l'action, et, malgré l'optimisme de parti pris répandu sur l'oeuvre comme un sable d'or, la douleur qui résulte de leurs perpétuels malentendus,' and yet he

claims (p. 206) 'Il en fit l'expression la plus haute de l'espèce de programme esthétique qui devenait sa religion, mais aussi la moins vraie de ses oeuvres et la moins humaine.' "Le vrai Tasse était un grand poète," 'dit M. Kuno Fischer'; "le Tasse de Goethe en est un plus grand encore." 'Corrigeons, s'il vous plaît, ce jugement, qui, avec une modification légère, nous fournira notre conclusion. Le vrai Tasse, né dans une époque peu propice, gêné par son milieu, en butte à de soupçons dangereux, fut cependant un grand poète, mais déjà un poète artificiel; le Tasse de Goethe, produit d'une imagination pliée à certains partis pris par une intelligence despotique, demeure un grand poète, mais plus artificiel encore. Peut-être l'oeuvre qu'il a inspirée restera-t-elle longtemps l'oeuvre préférée des métaphysiciens comme M. Kuno Fischer; les simples hommes auront une peine croissante à y trouver quelque plaisir.'

I confess to an inability quite to grasp the point. Is not a play which by dint of language consummately artistic interprets two characters together embracing all mankind and haunted by an exquisite perfume of refinement, eminently a work of art, irrespective of the principles which prompted its composition? *Torquato Tasso* will not, we think, remain merely 'l'oeuvre préférée des métaphysiciens'; on the contrary, this play, *Faust*, *Wilhelm Meister*, the lyrical poems as a whole, and the *Sprüche*, in prose and in verse are, to our mind, Goethe's most important and satisfactory works.

The Elective Affinities, Rod, on the whole, justly appreciates and we are glad to see that this much abused novel has not found another misinterpreter in him. For the fact should never be overlooked that the *Elective Affinities* embody in a manner never so completely attempted before and rarely since accomplished with so much art, a method of novel writing which within the last two generations has produced such remarkable results. I mean the method, according to which human actions are studied as the inevitable resultants of complex and often conflicting forces. Hence the *Elective Affinities* are the most important predecessor of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. M. Rod's whole frame of mind explains why he tries to convey to his reader the impression that the novel is virtually spoiled by tiresome discussions and descriptions.

Others in less acrid a mood, would prefer to characterize it as admirable in spite of a few not happy interpolations.

The most irritating chapter of the book, perhaps, is the one dealing with *Faust*. M. Schérer in his essay on Goethe very aptly says, 'Il y a de lui, soit dans ses poésies épigrammatiques et autres, soit dans ses pensées en prose, une grande quantité de ces mots qui éclairent la destinée parcequ'ils la résument, qui saisissent parce qu'on y reconnaît tout à coup le lien commun des expériences incohérentes, qui consolent en même temps et apaisent parce qu'ils vont au dernier fond des choses et en formulent la souveraine fatalité. La part du convenu et du préjugé est vraiment chez lui réduite à un minimum : son regard va droit à la substance dernière de tout phénomène, là où il n'y a plus lieu ni à l'étonnement, ni à l'indignation, mais simplement à la constatation.'

This gift of seeing 'droit à la substance' is the most conspicuous feature of *Faust*. We find in M. Rod no honest attempt at interpreting it. Nor does M. Rod see that Goethe's maturity is not merely the expression of his temperament, but the result of long and arduous training. Had Goethe never had the opportunity of becoming familiar with all the different phases of society, the highest and lowest, the palace and the hovel, as he did particularly during the first ten years in Weimar, and had he furthermore not learned to think in terms of science, and taught himself to look upon things as they are, irrespective of their effect upon our feelings, his work would lack its wonderful and impassioned truthfulness. Why then does M. Rod take pleasure in jeering at the commonplace of Goethe's life at the Weimar court, and at his scientific studies?

The objectivity we just spoke of, constitutes, we take it, one of the most important elements of 'Goetheism'; with it are coupled a sense of proportion and a sense of form, besides the intellectual catholicity, granted by M. Rod. Lastly, must be added to it, as one of its most remarkable excellencies, controlled exuberance. M. Rod's definition of Goetheism, therefore, appears to us absurdly one-sided and unfair (compare p. 54 et seq.). Why the knowledge of grief should be eliminated from Goetheism, it is difficult to understand. The author of *Tasso* and *Faust* certainly had felt its fang.

I have spoken so much of M. Rod's animosity to Goethe (a form of animosity which reminds one of the attitude characteristic of former admirers of Richard Wagner, who have turned against their idol) that it would be unfair not to speak of the splendid praise he bestows on the literary friendship of Goethe and Schiller. Curiously enough, M. Rod does not stop there, but occasionally drops remarks about Goethe's power and genius, without seemingly caring to explain these dark hints.

To summarize, I find myself intensely regretting the existence of this book. It contains some good pages, it is well written and interesting; but the author's evident hostility to Goethe blinds his judgment and makes the book worthless. In Germany it will do little harm, in English-speaking countries it can do no good but a great deal of harm. For in Germany, there is in some parts distinct lack of objectivity in the treatment of Goethe, and sometimes the very men who devote their lives to the study of his works, because of their uncritical admiration cause indifference and even irritation towards the master: Rod's book is itself a direct result of the reaction against the attitude of certain Goethe scholars. Outside of Germany, comparatively few people have grasped Goethe's vast powers and his importance for precisely our generation. For, who like him so maturely epitomizes the development of European culture during the last twenty-five centuries? Who has ever had a vaster horizon and has squared himself with so many problems of intellectual and moral life, who since the days of the Greeks to a greater extent combined those two apparently hostile elements, health and refinement? Who has with greater consistency pursued the even tenor of his way and built his House Beautiful higher above the turmoil of party strife? Goethe still remains one of the very greatest artists and most satisfactory companions and guides. Our age with admirable care and diligence labors to gather and prepare the material with which later generations may build up a new and broader culture; it is compelled to cultivate specialism and can produce but few individuals who rise to a height whence they may survey more than their own field; it finds itself almost forced to neglect culture, and does little to cultivate the sense

of form. Such an age finds immense material in Goethe to prevent it from too much yielding to its idiosyncrasies. Hence, for M. Rod to have pointed to insincerity in some of Goethe's works and to have done nothing towards better appreciating the man as a whole, is but a sorry merit.

A few mistakes may here be corrected, especially as Rod in some cases bases his arguments upon them.

Page 12 'ils (i. e. the members of the Romantic School) adoraient la poésie populaire, la vraie, celle dont Clément Brentano et Achim d'Arnim recueillaient de si curieux spécimens. . . . Tout cela étonnait fort le poète sexagénaire.' This looks as if Goethe did not enjoy real popular poetry. The editors of the *Wunderhorn* were the first to acknowledge the importance of Goethe's services for a correct understanding of it.

Page 14, we read 'lui qui, pendant de longues années, depuis l'époque lointaine de ses débuts, ne connaissait que le succès, il subit coup deux échecs. Ce fut d'abord celui des Affinités électives, que la critique accueillit assez mal. . . . etc.' His successes were far from uninterrupted: *Iphigenia* and *Tasso* were understood by only the select few and we know that Goethe felt this lack of intelligence.

Page 157 *Die Lustigen von Weimar* were not written during the first years in Weimar, but in 1813.

Page 172 (Goethe) . . . 'en revint transformé' (viz. from Italy). This does not correspond to the facts, as ought to be universally known by this time. The mere existence of *Grenzen der Menschheit* and especially of *Iphigenie* in prose would show that a Greek view of life and art had taken a strong hold on him before he left Germany. Furthermore, Volbehr has shown that his preference for antiquity in matters of art was very marked before he crossed the Alps.

Page 176, 'Goethe . . . se mit à composer une Didon, que d'ailleurs il ne publia pas.' Not Goethe, but remarkably enough, Frau von Stein wrote a drama entitled *Didon, ein Trauerspiel in fünf Aufzügen*, to give poetic expression to her disappointment. The text of this little play may be found in Fielitz's edition of Schöll's *Goethe's Briefe an Frau von Stein* 2, 488. The first mention of it is found in a letter of Frau von Stein to Schiller's wife, dated September 26, 1796. Schiller

himself wrote in high terms of it to Frau von Stein January 2d, 1797 (cf. Jonas *Schiller's Briefe*, 5, 140). In a letter dated June 9th, 1802, he promises Cotta to send 'Die versprochenen Szenen aus Dido. . . . zum Damen Kalender,' and a month later (July 9th) he speaks of sending the whole piece 'worüber wie übereingekommen sind' (cf. Jonas 6, 394 and 403).

Page 240, 'Le soir, dans le salon du bon libraire, on récitait des sonnets: il en composa toute une série, sur le livre de Pétrarque, en l'honneur de la nouvelle Laure' (i. e. Minna Herzlieb). The sonnets are not one organic series, all inspired by his love for Minna Herzlieb and referring to her. This view, though specious and attractive, and though well sustained by Kuno Fischer (*Goethe's Sonettenkranz*, Heidelberg, 1896), is untenable, as has been irrefutably proved (cf. Düntzer *Goethe's Jenaer Sonette*, 1807, *Zfd Ph.* 29, 98, Schipper *Ueber Goethe's Sonette. Pub. Mod. Lang. Assoc. of America*, 4, 275, Pniower, *AfdA.* 24, 179). CAMILLO VON KLENZE.

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Strassburger Goethevorträge. Zum Besten des für Strassburg geplanten Denkmals des jungen Goethe. Karl J. Trübner: Strassburg, 1899. Pp. 197.

EVERY age has to formulate the work of the towering geniuses of the past for itself: this volume contains a valuable summing-up, in broad generalizations, and from widely varied points of view, of the permanent contributions which Goethe has made to the world's culture. The authors are distinguished professors in the University of Strassburg, not only Germanists, but leading representatives of philosophy, Greek archæology, physics, and ethics being included.

Happy is the city which possesses an 'inner public,' interested to hear the best thought of its best thinkers upon such a theme—for these seven addresses were held as popular lectures, 'popular,' to be sure, in their charmingly clear, finished, and simple style, lightened by touches of graceful humor, and yet doing their audience the compliment of facing essential questions candidly and with no blinking of real values, pre-